

consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

Office of Consumer Affairs
Virginia H. Knauer, Director

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Mexico, si; CB, no

State Dept. says the Mexican government has ceased issuing permits to US citizens wishing to operate their CB radios in Mexico. This is due to a number of substantial violations of Mexican regulations—such as selling CBs as contraband & communicating with check points in smuggling drugs across the border into the US. CB units must now be removed before US drivers are allowed to enter Mexico.

US Embassy in Mexico City is still discussing with the Mexican government ways CBs can be imported with a permit. But at this point, State advises Americans that since they will be under Mexican laws they must abide by them & not try to take CB radios into Mexico.

Swine flu shots

President Ford has signed a bill that finally clears the way to protect consumers against swine flu. Program has been held up because insurance companies were reluctant to insure a program of this magnitude & were concerned about being involved in "nuisance" lawsuits.

New law says injury suits may be brought against the Federal Government, & if the suit is due to negligence or other fault, then the government may sue the drug manufacturer or doctor, depending on the nature of the injury. Under the law, drug companies are not allowed to make a profit from manufacturing the vaccine. In addition, each person, before he is vaccinated, has to be given an explanation of the risks & benefits of the vaccination & then is required to sign a consent form.

Fire extinguishers

If a small fire breaks out in your home, what should you do first? According to a Federal Government publication—*Fire Extinguishers*—you obviously should first get all of the people out—and then call the fire department. Then, & only if your own escape route is clear, should you consider fighting the fire yourself with a fire extinguisher.

There are several types of extinguishers to fight the 3 classes of home fires: Class A fires consist of ordinary combustible materials such as paper or cloth; Class B are fires of flammable liquids; & Class C are fires of electrical appliances & equipment. In addition, extinguishers are also rated by numbers in front of the letters indicating the approximate size of the fire they can put out—the higher the number the greater the extinguisher's ability to fight fires.

For more information, you may want to order *Fire Extinguishers* (189-D) which is available for 65¢ from Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Doctors & lawyers & advertising & prices

Most of the learned professions, such as medicine & law, have some sort of restriction against advertising. Members of these professions insist that these restrictions are necessary to protect consumers from unscrupulous practitioners & from deterioration of the quality of products & services available. Consumers can argue that these restrictions impose both economic & social costs in excess of the benefits to be gained from advertising prohibitions. Some Federal agencies question the validity or sufficiency of some claims made by professional organizations in support of their advertising prohibitions.

Some Federal investigations concerning the learned professions are:

- **Federal Trade Commission** (FTC) proposed last year that drug stores be allowed to advertise prescription drug prices. In May 1976, the **Supreme Court** ruled on a suit that challenged the authority of one state—Virginia—to ban commercial advertising of prescription drug prices because it was alleged that such a ban violated the guarantee of freedom of speech. Supreme Court agreed, & this decision is paving the way for consumers to get information on prices that otherwise might be denied them. Because of this decision, FTC feels it is unnecessary to propose regulations on drug price disclosure.

- **Justice Dept.** has started an antitrust action against the American Bar Association (ABA) to force the organization to remove its restrictions against advertising. Restrictions are in ABA's Code of Professional Responsibility. Code prohibits lawyers from engaging in price or informational advertising. Justice Dept. alleges that effects of the Code result in: (1) a restraint of price competition; (2) deprivation of the opportunity to obtain information about the cost & availability of legal services; (3) deprivation of benefits which result from free & open competition; (4) restraint upon lawyers preventing them from making their services readily & fully available.

- **Federal Trade Commission** (FTC) has issued a regulation that would eliminate existing restraints on the advertising of ophthalmic goods & services. FTC also adds that if adequate information were available at the retail level, there would be greater competitive incentives to sell eyeglasses at prices that bear a reasonable relationship to their costs at wholesale.

Rent-a-car

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has accepted consent orders prohibiting the nation's 3 largest car rental companies—Hertz, Avis & National—from attempting to monopolize the car rental business.

Orders, which do not constitute an admission of wrongdoing by the companies, prohibit each of the companies from engaging in anticompetitive practices, such as conspiring with competitors to fix prices & obtain airport bid specifications or concession agreements that might bar new competition.

Orders also prohibit companies from exercising renewal options in their present airport concession agreements & from providing false information to airport authorities that would affect competitors.

Complaint & consent agreements will remain on the public record until Sept. 9. Consumer comments received during this period will become part of the public record. For an analysis of the consent orders (#D. 9033), write to Public Reference Branch, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580.

How the top 20 moving companies compare: ICC report for 1975

Required 1975 performance reports filed by 2500 household moving companies are available for inspection at Interstate Commerce Commission's (ICC) headquarters in Washington (12th St. & Constitution Ave. NW) & at ICC's regional offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Fort Worth, Philadelphia & San Francisco. ICC requires each moving company (except those operating only within a state) to give a copy of its report to each prospective shipper. (This way consumers can compare performance reports of different companies when trying to decide which company should be hired to handle the move.)

CONSUMER NEWS has listed the performance data for the top 20 moving companies, selected on

the basis of the amount of business. These are not necessarily the best.

NOTE: ICC statistics have not been verified by the Defense Dept. or other expenses.

For more information, contact the Chief, Household Goods Division, phone: 202-275-7852, for a release about complaints, Interstate Commerce Commission, Washington, D.C. 20585. The hotline listed above is for consumer complaints.

PERFORMANCE DATA											
Shipments delivered	56,588	79,012	7495	15,023	42,991	2049	1004	8873	2838	5873	
Shipments estimated	42,958	41,567	4471	9185	20,798	793	800	6187	1592	2288	
Percentage of shipments on which there occurred a 10% or greater overestimation of charges	31.77%	22.35%	17.9%	29.84%	36.48%	24.7%	17.8%	24.09%	18.6%	28.4%	
Percentage of shipments on which there occurred a 10% or greater underestimation of charges	26.73%	26.08%	19.2%	26.08%	24.02%	26.2%	18.1%	19.42%	27.6%	27.0%	
Percentage of shipments picked up more than 5 days later than specified in the Order for Service	1.06%	2.46%	1.20%	.35%	1.36%	.5%	.3%	2.02%	1.7%	1.9%	
Percentage of shipments picked up 1 to 5 days later than specified in the Order of Service	3.54%	6.17%	3.00%	.68%	4.13%	2%	1.7%	4.32%	6.1%	2.0%	
Percentage of shipments delivered more than 5 days later than specified in the Order for Service	4.56%	4.24%	7.87%	6.33%	3.53%	4.5%	3.9%	9.09%	5.2%	4.2%	
Percentage of shipments delivered 1 to 5 days later than specified in the Order for Service	12.21%	7.77%	10.02%	9.50%	5.51%	7%	6.2%	9.37%	8%	9.0%	
Percentage of shipments on which a \$50 or greater claim for loss or damage was filed	22.99%	14.3%	23.71%	17.01%	20.88%	13.3%	23%	14.63%	8.9%	13.8%	
Percentage of claims filed for damages or expenses resulting from moving company delay	.41%	⁹¹ / ₁₀₀ of 1%	1.52%	.835%	1.95%	.7%	.8%	.48%	.005%	.7%	
Average number of consecutive days to settle claims for loss or damage	38	28	28	24	22	17.1	22	26	41	38	
Percentage of claims settled during the calendar year that were settled:											
a. Before the shipper filed a law suit	99.56%	98 & ⁸ / ₁₀₀ of 1%	99.21%	99.49%	99.20%	99.7%	99.9%	99.97%	100%	99.5%	
b. After the shipper filed a law suit but before the court's final decree	.37%	1 & ⁸⁰ / ₁₀₀ of 1%	.51%	.46%	.47%	.3%	.1%	.011%	0%	0.2%	
c. After the court's final decree	.07%	¹² / ₁₀₀ of 1%	.28%	.05%	.33%	0%	0%	.022%	0%	0.3%	

amount of business they do—they handle about 80% of the moving business in the US. necessarily the "best" 20—just the "biggest" 20.

C stresses that the figures given here were submitted by the companies, & they have ed by ICC. Also, figures are for consumer shipments, not shipments paid for by or other Federal agencies or by private corporations that pay for employee moving

information about household moving, contact an ICC regional office or Ray Atherton, Old Goods Branch, Interstate Commerce Commission, Washington, DC 20423; telephone 7852; toll-free hotline (except Washington, DC): 800-424-9312. For a copy of a press complaints against the top 25 moving companies, contact Household Goods Moving Interstate Commerce Commission, Washington, DC 20423; telephone 202-275-7252, or ed above.

Recalls

BUBBLE BATH—Food & Drug Administration (FDA) announces recall of approximately 32,000 bottles of Max Factor Country Garden Wild Strawberry Bubble Bath because the product may have bacterial contamination due to factory conditions. Product was manufactured by Cosway Co. Inc., Gardena, CA, & distributed nationwide. What to do: Return product to place where bought for refund.

PACIFIERS—Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued a second public notice in cooperation with La Cibeles Inc., for the recall of baby pacifiers known as "Chupetes," sold in 4 series marked "Fauna," "Flower," "Texas" & "Navy." They are imported from Spain & are usually sold in plastic & cardboard casings with pictures on the backing & the name of the series in large letters on the top. Approximately 130,000 of the original 168,000 have been returned to La Cibeles since February 1976. What to do: immediately remove it from the child's possession & return it to the place of purchase for a refund.

ELECTRIC ARC WELDERS—Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announces recall of 250,000 electric arc welders made since 1950 by Western Mfg. & Supply Co., also known as Midway Sales Inc., Kearney, NE. Welders, sold by mail order, may cause an electric shock & skin burns. Name Midway appears on the face plate with model numbers DD, D, E, F, DS & K. Consumers who have these welders should mail them to Western Mfg. & Supply Co., 1400 W 22nd St., Kearny, NE 68847, Att: Mr. P. Beshore. Include a note indicating your return address & cost for postage. A full refund for the welder & cost of postage will be sent.

CARS—American Motors Corp. announces recall of 3,205 1974 & 1975 Matadors with possibly defective power brake booster assemblies. According to AMC, in the affected cars, the power brake booster assembly could separate when extremely high brake pedal force is applied. This could cause a sudden & complete loss of the car's hydraulic braking capabilities without warning & could result in a vehicle crash. However, AMC said that the possibility of this failure can be minimized by avoiding hard stops. The mechanical or emergency braking system is not affected & may be used to bring the car to a stop.

What to do: If you own one of the affected cars, you probably will be receiving a recall notice from AMC telling you what steps to take. Otherwise, contact your dealer to arrange to have your car inspected & repaired. Your dealer will make the necessary repairs at no cost to you. For more information on the recall, you may want to contact AMC by calling the toll-free hotline at 800-521-7000 (in Michigan the number is 800-572-9570).

National Van Lines Inc.		Neptune World Wide Moving		North American Van Lines		Pan American Van Lines		Pyramid Van Lines		Republic Van & Storage Co.		Smyth Van Lines		Trans-American Van Service Not in top 20 in 1974		United Van Lines		Wheaton Van Lines	
3906	899	51,382	1997	169	6017	6356	2272	34,913	5123										
2151	854	30,377	1842	149	4421	4081	1096	18,109	2432										
22.96%	15%	17.0%	33%	18.1%	25.6%	16.63%	12.9%	24.44%	34.8%										
32.91%	17%	30.3%	15%	13.4%	29.8%	31.07%	11.7%	25.87%	22.5%										
2.11%	0.0%	1.8%	2%	0%	0.4%	3.54%	5.1%	1.48%	.3%										
3.95%	0.3%	5.0%	0%	0%	2.8%	6.88%	7.6%	4.83%	.7%										
16.32%	0.5%	3.6%	3%	9.5%	6.1%	7.35%	12.8%	2.65%	6.8%										
16.58%	4.8%	7.9%	11%	18.3%	11.7%	7.98%	8.5%	7.30%	6.4%										
16.87%	8.9%	16.1%	23%	18.3%	18.9%	16.08%	7.7%	13.94%	11.7%										
1.66%	0.1%	0.8%	1%	1.8%	1.1%	1.64%	0.7%	.45%	0.7%										
27.2	26	29.5	37	44.6	28.2	35	57	18	38										
97.42%	99.9%	99.06%	99.9%	100%	99.3%	97.17%	98.90%	99.36%	100%										
.76%	0.1%	0.84%	0.1%	0%	0.5%	2.73%	0%	.56%	0%										
1.52%	0.0%	0.10%	0%	0%	0.2%	0.10%	1.10%	.08%	0%										

800-424-9393

That's the new toll-free Auto Safety Hotline number for all states (except Alaska & Hawaii) for the final 4 months of a one-year experimental project sponsored by National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In operation for the first 8 months as a 10-state experiment [CONSUMER NEWS: Nov. 15, 1975], the hotline collects highway safety data from car owners & offers assistance to consumers on safety matters within NHTSA's jurisdiction. In addition, the hotline provides recall information for any make or model car. Persons operating the hotline will send necessary forms so that owners can obtain verification & defect repairs through car makers.

Residents in Alaska, Hawaii & Washington, DC, can call the hotline by dialing 202-426-0123 & paying for the call themselves.

Readers wanted

Here's an opportunity to receive up-to-date information about transportation. **Transportation Dept.'s Office of Consumer Affairs** is expanding the mailing list for its newsletter *TranspoTopics*, which reports on consumer-oriented programs at Transportation Dept.

For a free subscription, send name & address to Office of Consumer Affairs (TES-40), Transportation Dept., Washington, DC 20590.

Federal crime insurance

If you are concerned about protecting your home or business against break-ins & burglaries, you may now be able to get affordable crime insurance from the Federal Government if you live in certain states.

Through a program developed by **Housing & Urban Development Dept's (HUD) Federal Insurance Administration (FIA)**, consumers living in Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island & Tennessee can get a residential crime insurance policy that will protect them against loss for up to \$10,000 resulting from robbery or burglary of their houses or apartments. FIA also offers commercial crime insurance policies to protect small businesses against loss for up to \$15,000. In both cases, the insurance will not be cancelled because of losses.

Cost of this crime insurance varies according to the crime rates in the city or town where the consumer lives &, for small businesses, it also varies according to the kind of business & the amount of annual gross receipts. To purchase Federal crime insurance—or to find out more about its cost & coverage—you can contact any licensed property insurance agent or broker operating in the above states. You can also get applications for this insurance directly from the company servicing the state.

Safety Management Institute, Washington, D.C. (toll-free 800-638-8780) offers the insurance for consumers living in Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, Rhode Island & Tennessee.

Insurance Company of North America, Macon, GA, (toll-free 800-841-5961) services Delaware, Massachusetts, New York, & Pennsylvania.

Aetna Casualty & Surety Company provides policies for Florida & New Jersey. (New Jersey & Florida consumers should call the Safety Management toll-free number for more information).

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